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Marital Status: Overview, 2011

by Anne Milan

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.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0^s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
^{p}	preliminary
^{r}	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
^{E}	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published
*	significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Marital Status: Overview, 2011

This article analyses patterns related to marital status and nuptiality in Canada. Data on marital and conjugal status come primarily from the 2011 Census of Population,[1] with comparisons to historical data where appropriate, particularly 1981.[2]

In addition, data from the Canadian Vital Statistics Database on marriage and divorce are also analysed, with an emphasis on recent trends.[3]

Legal marital status

Legal marital status refers to the marital status of the person under the law (e.g., never married, married, divorced or separated, or widowed). In 2011, 46.4% of the population aged 15 and over was legally married, while 53.6% was unmarried—that is, never married, divorced or separated, or widowed—a widening of the gap first observed among the total population in 2001.[4] In contrast, thirty years earlier, in 1981, 60.9% of the population aged 15 and over was married, while 39.1% was unmarried.

The provinces with the largest shares of the population aged 15 and over that were married in 2011 were Newfoundland and Labrador (52.9%), Prince Edward Island (51.7%), Ontario (50.3%) and Alberta (50.2%). The smallest shares of the population that was married were found in the territories: Yukon (37.6%), Northwest Territories (35.0%), Nunavut (29.7%) and in the province of Quebec (35.4%).

The decreasing share over time of the population that was married and the corresponding increase in the unmarried population may be related to a number of factors, including a higher average age at marriage and an increase in the divorced or separated population. In addition, a higher proportion of people live in common-law unions than in the past—either as a relatively shorter-term relationship prior to marriage or as a longer-term alternative, as well as a fairly large share of young adults who live in the parental home, most of whom have never been married.

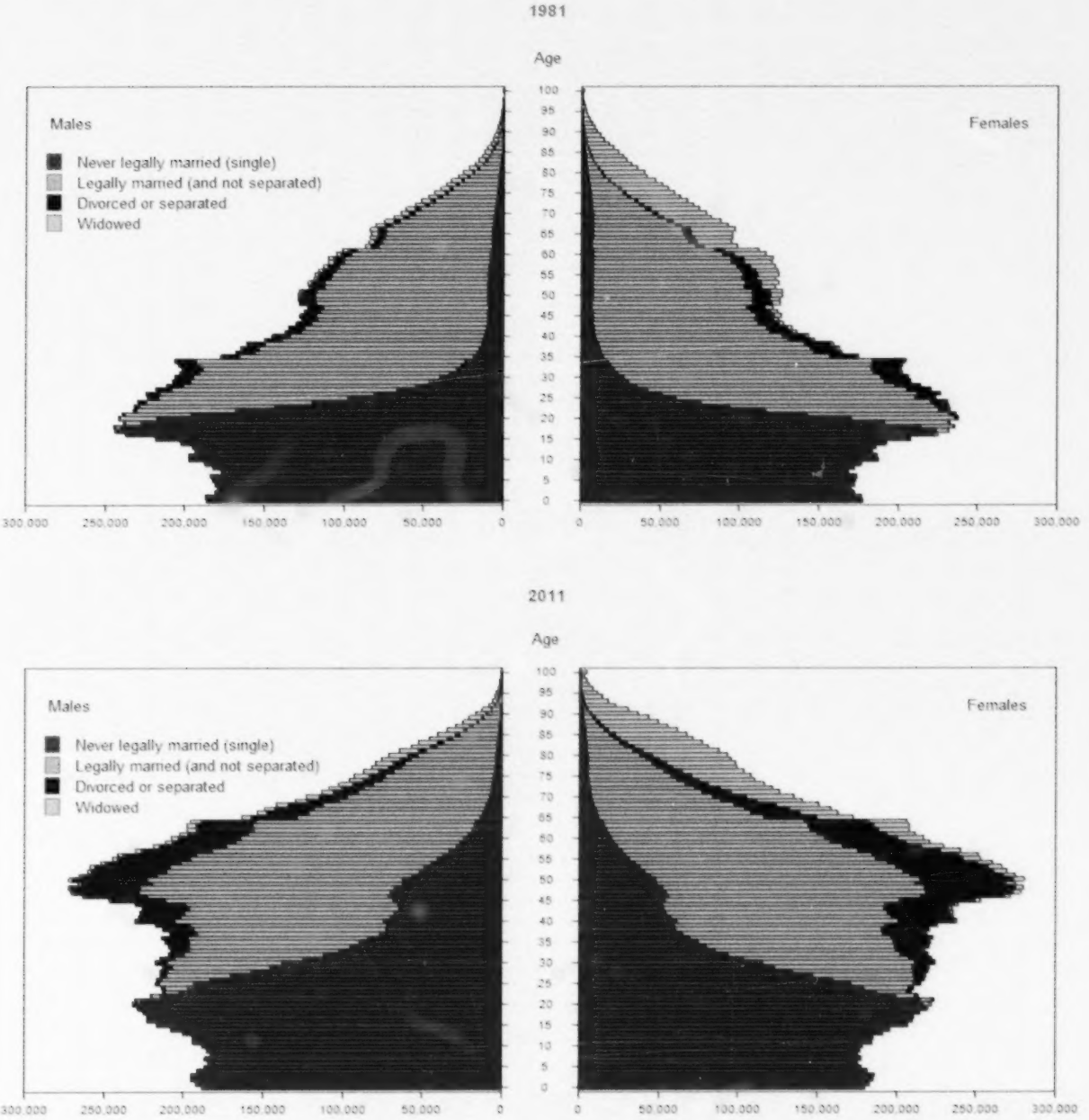
The population pyramids of the marital status categories for 1981 and 2011 show not only the changing age structure of the population but also the shifting concentrations of marital states. Specifically, in 2011 there was a smaller population that was married in the younger to middle adult years combined with a larger population of middle-aged to older adults that was never-married, divorced or separated compared to 1981 (Figure 1).

Among the population that was never married, there was a large increase in the proportions for those in their twenties and thirties in 2011 compared to 1981. For young adults aged 25 to 29, the proportion who were never married rose from about one-quarter of this population (26.0%) in 1981 to close to three-quarters (73.1%) in 2011.

Prior to age 65 in 1981 and before age 75 in 2011, men were more likely than women to have never been legally married—especially for men under age 60 in 2011 and under age 35 in 1981 (Figure 2). This reflects that, on average, men tend to enter unions at slightly older ages than do women, and among opposite-sex couples, men tend to partner with women slightly younger than themselves. The share of men in their late twenties who were never married increased from 32.0% in 1981 to 78.8% in 2011; and for women in this age group, the corresponding increase was from 20.0% to 67.4%.

1. In this article, 2011 Census of Population data in the section on legal marital status are based on the total population, including analysis of the legally married, never-married, and divorced or separated population. Data in the sections on conjugal status and opposite-sex and same-sex couples are based on the population living in private households.
2. In 1981, common-law partners were included with the married population. This represents about 715,700 people or 3.8% of the population aged 15 and over. Consequently, the legally married population is slightly overestimated and the single (never married), divorced or separated and widowed populations are slightly underestimated.
3. The collection of marriage and divorce data in the Canadian Vital Statistics Database has been discontinued. The final year available for these data is 2008.
4. When using data for the population aged 15 and over in private households, a higher share of unmarried than married population was first observed in 2006.

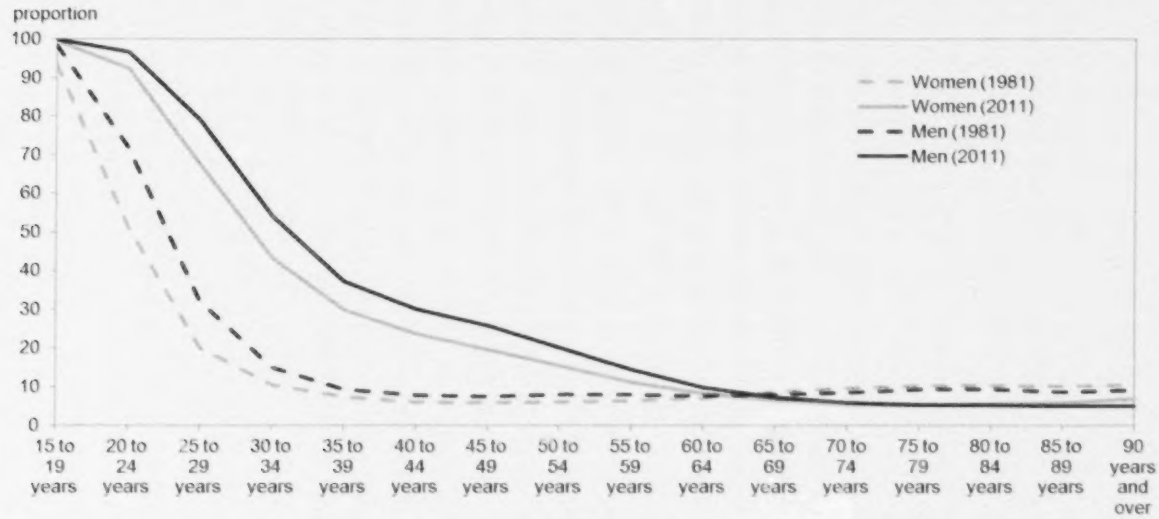
Figure 1
Population pyramids of legal marital status by single year of age and sex, Canada, 1981 and 2011



Notes: In 1981, common-law partners were included with the married population. This represents about 715,700 people or 3.8% of the population aged 15 and over. Consequently, the legally married population is slightly overestimated and the single (never married), divorced or separated and widowed populations are slightly underestimated.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 and 2011.

Figure 2
Proportion of population aged 15 and over that was never married by age group and sex, Canada, 1981 and 2011



Notes: In 1981, the never-married population excludes common-law partners whose legal marital status was never-married. Less than 4% of the population aged 15 and over lived common-law in 1981.
Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 and 2011.

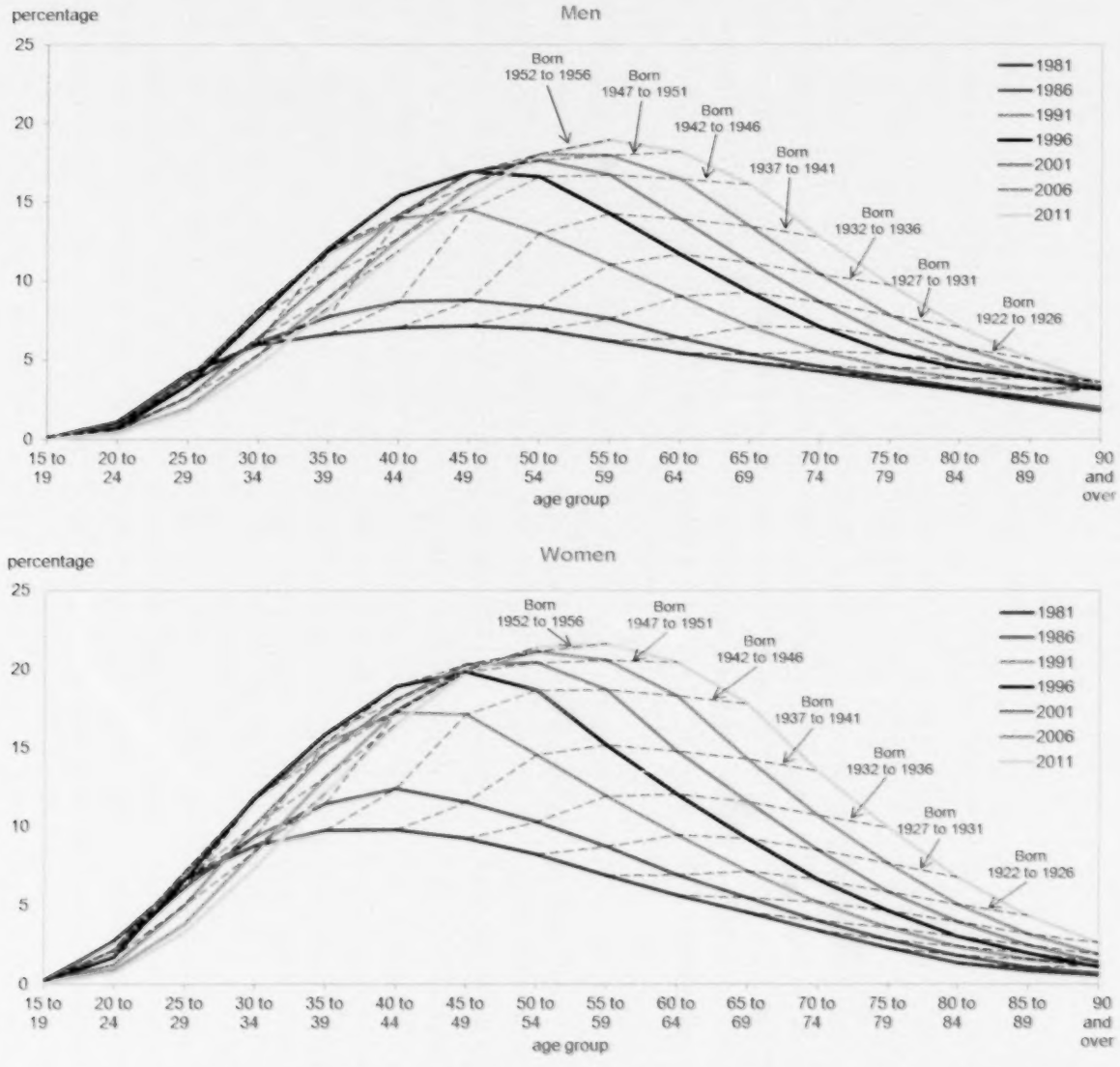
Even among individuals in their early thirties, the proportion of men who were never married increased from 15.0% in 1981 to 54.0% in 2011. For women, the increase was from 10.5% in 1981 to 43.4% in 2011. From age 65 onward, however, there was relative convergence between the sexes, and for both, the share that was never married was slightly larger in 1981 than in 2011.

There has been an overall increase over the past three decades in the share of the population aged 15 and over that was divorced or separated, rising from 5.1% in 1981 to 11.5% in 2011. During the past decade, however, there has been a decreasing proportion of the population under age 50 that was divorced or separated, for both men and women (Figure 3). For some age groups, the decline in share began even earlier: for example, 12.0% of men in their late thirties were divorced or separated in 1996, dropping to 8.3% in 2011. For women in this age group, the shares fell from 15.8% to 12.1% between 1996 and 2011. This could reflect the decreasing proportions of the population in these younger age groups that were legally married—largely due to the increase in common-law unions—therefore, the share that was divorced or separated would, in turn, be lower.

In contrast, for both women and men, the age of people who are divorced or separated has been shifting upward and the share has been increasing especially for individuals aged 50 and over. In 2011, about one in five people in their late fifties were divorced or separated (21.6% of women and 18.9% of men), the highest among the age groups. In comparison, in 1981, 6.9% of women and 6.2% of men in this age group were divorced or separated. The largest share of the population who was divorced or separated thirty years ago, however, was for women in their late thirties and early forties (just under 10%) and for men it was during their forties and early fifties (about 7%).

The increase in the share of the population who are divorced or separated can also be examined from a birth cohort perspective. For example, 55- to 59-year-olds in 2011 were born in 1952 to 1956 and were, therefore, aged 25 to 29 in 1981. Over this thirty year period, there was about a three-fold increase in the share of women in this birth cohort who were divorced or separated and a nearly five-fold increase for men. Older cohorts also experienced increases in the proportion that were divorced or separated until about their senior years, followed by slightly decreasing shares as they continued to age.

Figure 3
Proportion of population aged 15 and over that was divorced or separated by age group, sex and birth cohort, Canada, 1981 to 2011



Notes: In 1981, the divorced and separated population excludes common-law partners whose legal marital status was divorced or separated. Less than 4% of the population aged 15 and over lived common-law in 1981.
For simplicity, not all birth cohorts are labelled.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 to 2011.

There may be an overall larger share of the population who are divorced due to legislative changes during the past several decades which have made it easier to obtain a divorce.[5] Furthermore, people who do not subsequently remarry retain the legal marital status of divorced, including those who form common-law unions. It should also be noted that some separated individuals may not pursue a divorce—in the short or long term—for a variety of reasons.

5. For more discussion of the divorce legislation, see the section of this article entitled Divorces, 2008.

Conjugal status

Conjugal status refers to the nature of the relationship between the members of a couple. Specifically, it indicates whether the members of a couple are legally married to each other or whether they are living in a common-law relationship. The majority of people aged 15 and over were part of a couple in 2011, either as a common-law partner or a married spouse.[6] In 2011, 57.7% of the population aged 15 and over who lived in private households were part of couples, down slightly from 61.1% thirty years earlier in 1981.

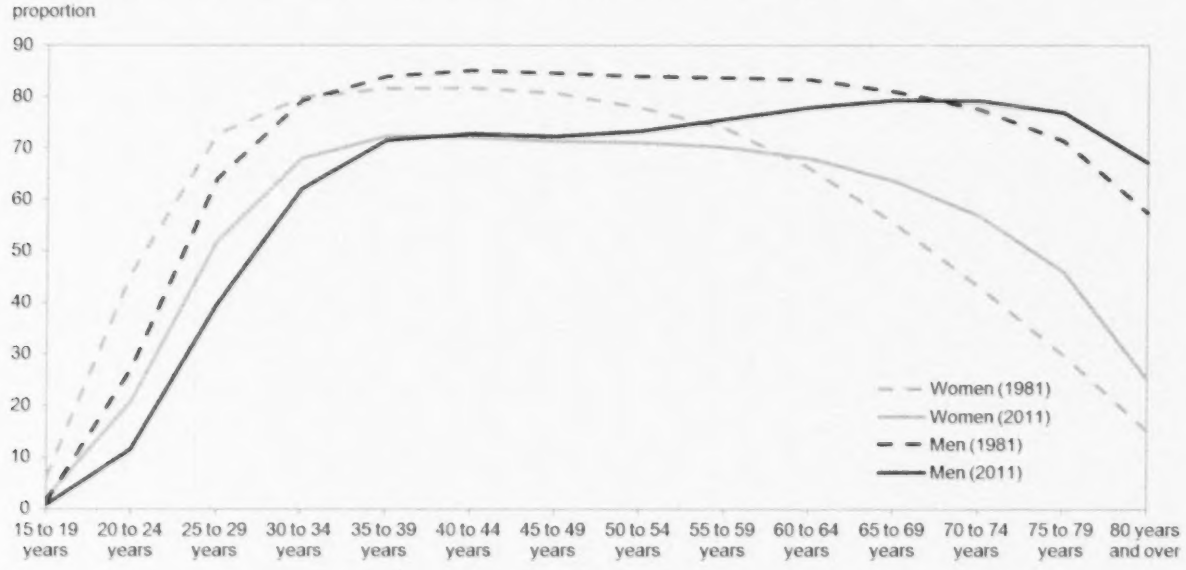
While the overall share of the population in couples has not changed substantially over these three decades, some aspects related to the diversity of couples themselves—and the people who comprise them—have increased. In some cases, conceptual changes allow for the measurement of more varied characteristics of individuals in couples, such as whether they are married spouses or common-law partners and whether they are in a relationship that is opposite-sex or same-sex.

Most people in couples are married spouses, but the share has dropped over time. In 2011, about four-fifths (80.1%) of individuals in couples were married spouses and the remaining one-fifth (19.9%) were common-law partners. Three decades earlier, in 1981, 93.7% of people in couples were married spouses while 6.3% were common-law partners.

Overall, the shares of women in a couple were lower in 2011 than in 1981 for all age groups under 60. For men, the proportion of each age group in a couple was lower in 2011 than in 1981 for all age groups under 70 (Figure 4).

In contrast, the increased share of women in couples is particularly evident for those in their seventies. In 2011, 46.0% of women aged 75 to 79 were in couples, up from 29.9% in 1981. For men, the largest increase in proportion occurred at age 80 and over: in 2011, 67.0% of men in this age group were in couples compared to 57.3% in 1981.

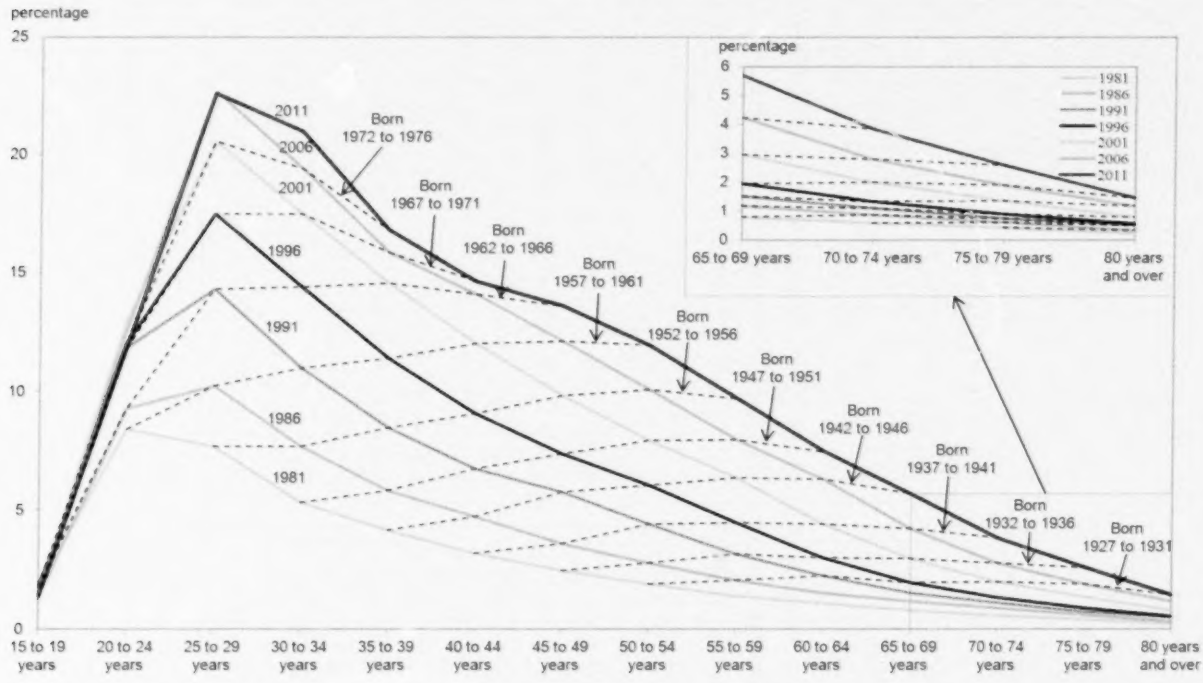
Figure 4
Proportion of population aged 15 and over in couples, by age group and sex, Canada, 1981 and 2011



Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 to 2011.

6. See also Statistics Canada. 2012. *Portrait of Families and Living Arrangements in Canada*, Catalogue no. 98-312-XWE2011001.

Figure 5
Proportion of population aged 15 and over that lived common-law by age group and birth cohort, Canada, 1981 to 2011



Note: For simplicity, not all birth cohorts are labeled.
Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1981 to 2011.

The increase in the senior population in couples, particularly senior women, can be at least partially attributed to the decreased gap in the life expectancy between men and women. While it remains higher, on average, for women than for men, gains have been more rapid for men in recent decades allowing more unions to endure, or be formed, at older ages.[7]

Common-law unions have continued to increase over the past three decades in Canada. In 2011, 11.5% of the population aged 15 and over lived in a common-law union, up from 3.8% in 1981.

Common-law unions were most prevalent among young adults, particularly those aged 25 to 29. However, the share has generally been increasing within cohorts, as well as for age groups over time (Figure 5). In other words, increases in persons living as common-law partners are evident both within and across cohorts for most census years between 1981 and 2011. For example, in 1981, 7.7% of 25- to 29-year-olds lived common-law, nearly tripling to 22.6% in 2011. From the cohort perspective, individuals in their late twenties in 1981 were born between 1952 and 1956. This cohort was aged 55 to 59 in 2011, of whom, 9.7% lived common-law that year.

One of the important exceptions to this increase is for those in their early twenties. Although the proportion of young adults living common-law has generally been increasing since it was first measured in 1981, the share of those in their early twenties that lived common-law has slightly declined over the past decade. The proportion of 20- to 24-year-olds that lived common-law decreased from 13.1% in 2001 to 11.8% in 2011. These young adults may be concentrating more on educational, employment or other objectives beyond those related to being a spouse or partner.

7. See also Statistics Canada. 2012. "Living arrangements of seniors", *Census in Brief series*, Catalogue no. 98-312-X2011003.

Common-law unions have also become increasingly popular at older ages, probably reflecting more social acceptance of this living arrangement by older age groups, more 'aging in place' of common-law partners (that is, older partners who formed their union while at younger ages), a cohort effect or all of these factors. In general, individuals may still want to be part of a couple but perhaps with fewer perceived obligations compared to marriage. In 1981, over half (50.6%) of all individuals in common-law unions were aged 20 to 29 and 19.0% were aged 40 or over. By 2011, less than one-quarter (23.7%) of all common-law partners were in their twenties, while approximately half (49.6%) were in their forties or older.

Common-law unions have grown most rapidly among older age groups in recent years, specifically for people in their late forties and over. The number of individuals aged 65 to 69 in common-law unions rose 66.5% between 2006 and 2011, the fastest pace of all age groups. Conversely, growth occurred at a much slower pace among younger individuals, and there were declines in some cases.

Partially accounting for the growth is that members of the large baby-boom cohort, born between 1946 and 1965, were aged 46 to 65 in 2011. In fact, married spouses in this age group also grew between 2006 and 2011 but growth was more rapid for common-law partners. For example, married spouses aged 60 to 64 grew 24.6% in the five years prior to 2011 but growth for common-law partners in this age group was more than double at 53.7%. In contrast, people in their early forties were baby-busters, the first cohort to follow the large cohort of baby-boomers. The number of people aged 40 to 44 in a common-law union fell more than 7% between 2006 and 2011, reflecting an overall decline in the population of this age group during the past five years.

As a share of all couples, common-law unions have always been proportionally higher in the province of Quebec as well as in the territories. Nearly half (45.6%) of couples in Nunavut were common-law, and shares were also large in the Northwest Territories (36.4%) and Yukon (31.5%). Among the provinces, 37.8% of couples in Quebec were common-law, much higher than the average of the other provinces (14.4%).

The larger proportion of common-law couples in Quebec compared to other provinces is a long-term pattern dating back to the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s—a period of declining influence of the Catholic church in the context of broadened divorce legislation, more accessible contraception, and increased education and labour force participation of women.[8] The territories, particularly Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, have a higher Aboriginal population as well as a younger population, characteristics which are associated with a greater tendency to be in common-law unions than married unions.

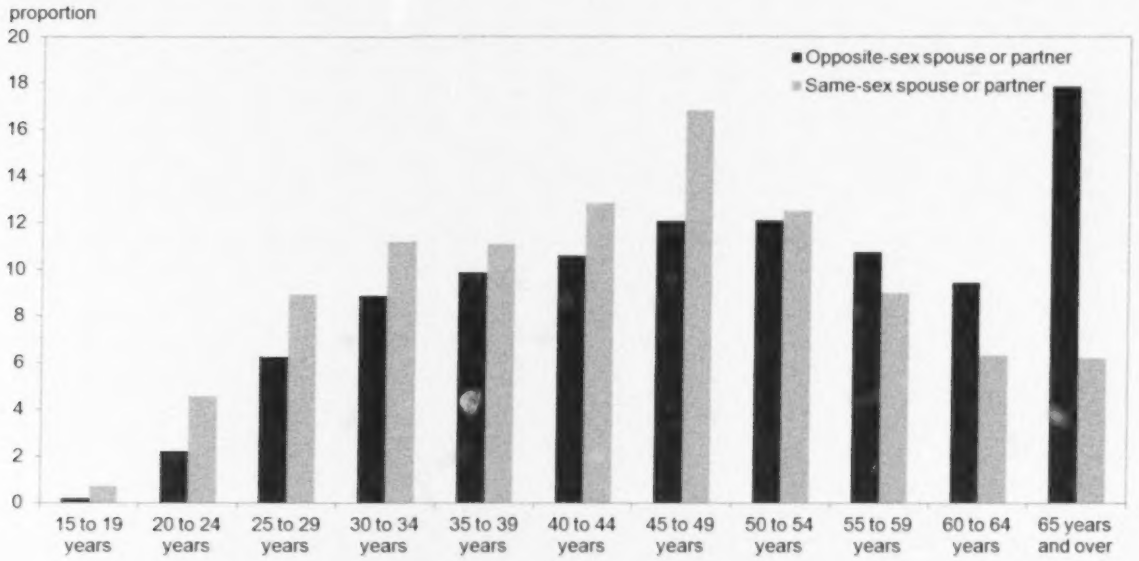
Same-sex and opposite-sex couples

Same-sex common-law couples were first enumerated in 2001 and same-sex married couples were first counted in 2006,[9] following the legalization of same-sex marriage across Canada in 2005.[10]

In 2011, there were 64,575 same-sex couples, of which about 3 in 10 were married couples.[11] Five years earlier, in 2006, there were 45,345 couples, of which 16.5% were married couples.

8. Peron, Y. 2003. "Du mariage obligatoire au mariage facultatif", in Piché, Victor and Céline Le Bourdais. 2003. *La démographie québécoise. Enjeux du XXIe siècle*, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, chapter 3, pages 110 to 143, Canada.
9. Data on same-sex married couples were collected in the 2006 Census of Population as a write-in response to the 'Other' category on Question 6, Relationship to Person 1.
10. Bill C-38, the *Civil Marriage Act*, was adopted on July 20, 2005 which legalized same-sex marriage across Canada. Some provinces and territories had already legalized same-sex marriage, beginning with Ontario in June, 2003.
11. The questionnaires of the 2011 Census of Population and the 2011 National Household Survey introduced for the first time a specific response on household relationships to determine the number of same-sex married couples. Analysis of the data on same-sex married couples has shown that there may be an overestimation of this family type and marital status. The 2011 Census shows a total of 64,575 same-sex couples in Canada, of which 21,015 are married couples. The range of overestimation of both these counts, at the national level, is between 0 and 4,500. For more information see the *Families Reference Guide, 2011 Census*.

Figure 6
Distribution (in percentage) of married spouse or common-law partner by opposite-sex or same-sex status and age group, Canada, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

The proportion of same-sex couples in Canada (0.8% of all couples in 2011) is consistent with recent data from other countries including Australia (0.7% in 2011)[12] and the United Kingdom (0.4% in 2011).[13] Measured as a share of all households, 0.6% of households in the United States consisted of same-sex couples in 2010.[14]

A larger share of same-sex couples was male (54.5%) than female (45.5%) in 2011, similar for both married and common-law couples. Individuals in same-sex couples were also younger than those in opposite-sex couples (Figure 6). For all age groups under age 55 there were larger shares of same-sex spouses or partners. About one-quarter (25.3%) of individuals in same-sex couples were under the age of 35 compared to 17.5% of individuals in opposite-sex couples. The age difference was most pronounced for those aged 65 and over. The prevalence of individuals in opposite-sex couples who were seniors was close to three times greater than that for same-sex spouses or partners (17.8% compared with 6.2%).

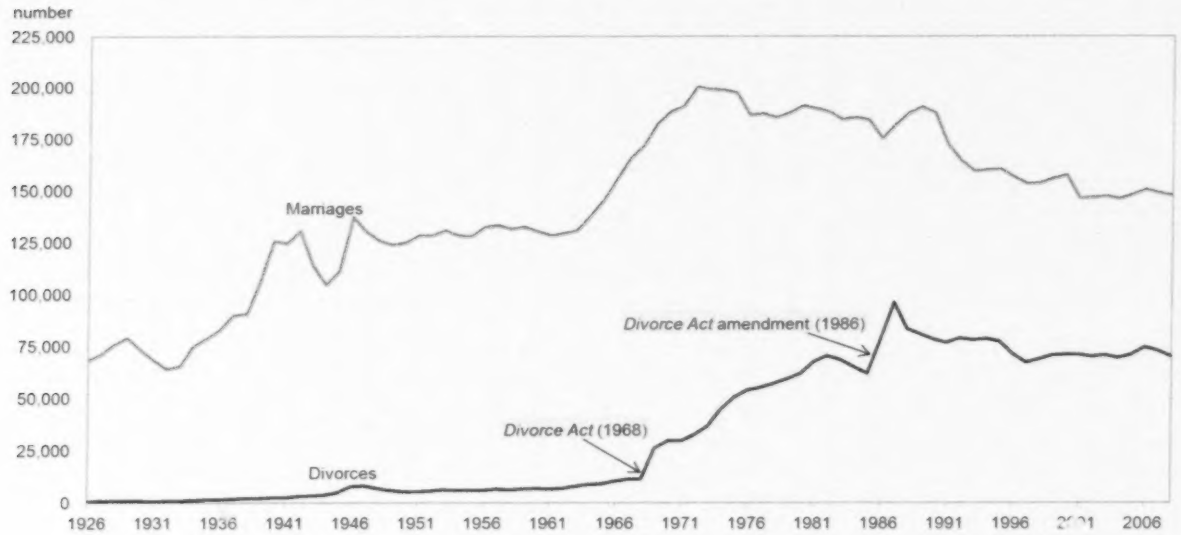
Marriages, 2008[15]

Marriages in Canada are analysed using administrative data from the Canadian Vital Statistics Database. In addition to the number of marriages, the marriage indicators examined in this section include the crude rate, monthly distribution and average age at marriage for the nation as a whole, as well as some provincial and territorial differences.

In 2008, there were 147,848 marriages in Canada, the second year of decline, and the lowest number of marriages since 2004 (Figure 7). The crude marriage rate, that is, the number of marriages per 1,000 population, was 4.4 marriages in 2008, down slightly from 4.5 in 2007 (Table 1). This was the lowest crude marriage rate in the history of the vital statistics data on marriages.

12. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2012. *Counts of same-sex couples in the 2011 Census*.
13. Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics. 2011. *Bulletin: Families and Households, 2001 to 2011*, table 1: families by family type in 2001 and 2011.
14. U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. *2010 Census Briefs. Households and families*, C2010B4-13, table 2: households by type: 2000 and 2010.
15. Marriage data in this section are from Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriage Database, Survey 3232.

Figure 7
Number of marriages and divorces, Canada, 1926 to 2008



Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriages Database, 1926 to 2008, Survey 3232 and Canadian Vital Statistics, Divorces Database, 1926 to 2008, Survey 3235.

Table 1
Marriages and crude marriage rates, Canada, provinces and territories, 1981 to 2008

Year	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.	Canada
	number													
1981	3,758	849	6,632	5,108	41,006	70,283	8,123	7,329	21,782	24,700	235	282	...	190,088
1986	3,421	970	6,445	4,962	33,083	70,839	7,816	6,820	18,896	21,826	183	257	...	175,518
1991	3,480	876	5,845	4,521	28,957	73,083	7,032	5,923	18,612	23,691	196	215	...	172,431
1996	3,195	924	5,392	4,366	23,999	66,241	6,449	5,671	17,283	22,839	198	206	...	156,763
2001	2,967	901	4,903	3,906	22,014	62,582	5,970	5,068	17,436	20,568	148	142	101	146,706
2002	2,963	901	4,899	3,818	22,017	61,630	5,906	5,068	17,985	21,263	143	145	72	146,810
2003	2,880	824	4,746	3,724	21,167	63,517	5,661	4,983	17,624	21,999	158	141	67	147,491
2004	2,859	851	4,610	3,590	21,312	62,480	5,706	5,050	17,460	22,094	150	132	69	146,363
2005	2,777	892	4,863	3,758	22,289	61,712	5,729	5,125	17,907	22,652	145	123	41	148,013
2006	2,662	843	4,759	3,845	21,996	62,982	5,776	5,161	18,725	23,529	154	108	61	150,601
2007	2,755	883	4,774	3,761	22,209	61,179	5,797	5,245	19,099	22,977	176	128	73	149,056
2008	2,705	942	4,622	3,624	22,310	60,343	5,609	5,339	19,045	22,977	134	120	78	147,848
	rate per 1,000													
1981	6.5	6.9	7.8	7.2	6.3	8.0	7.8	7.5	9.5	8.7	9.8	5.9	...	7.7
1986	5.9	7.6	7.2	6.8	4.9	7.5	7.2	6.6	7.8	7.3	7.5	4.7	...	6.7
1991	6.0	6.7	6.4	6.1	4.1	7.0	6.3	5.9	7.2	7.0	6.8	5.6	...	6.2
1996	5.7	6.8	5.8	5.8	3.3	6.0	5.7	5.6	6.2	5.9	6.3	4.9	...	5.3
2001	5.7	6.6	5.3	5.2	3.0	5.3	5.2	5.1	5.7	5.0	4.9	3.5	3.6	4.7
2002	5.7	6.6	5.2	5.1	3.0	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.7	5.2	4.7	3.5	2.5	4.7
2003	5.6	6.0	5.1	5.0	2.8	5.2	4.9	5.0	5.5	5.3	5.1	3.3	2.3	4.7
2004	5.5	6.2	4.9	4.8	2.8	5.0	4.9	5.1	5.4	5.3	4.8	3.0	2.3	4.6
2005	5.4	6.5	5.2	5.0	2.9	4.9	4.9	5.2	5.4	5.4	4.5	2.8	1.4	4.6
2006	5.2	6.1	5.1	5.2	2.9	5.0	4.9	5.2	5.5	5.5	4.8	2.5	2.0	4.6
2007	5.4	6.4	5.1	5.0	2.9	4.8	4.9	5.2	5.4	5.3	5.4	2.9	2.3	4.5
2008	5.3	6.8	4.9	4.9	2.9	4.7	4.7	5.3	5.3	5.2	4.0	2.7	2.5	4.4

Note: Nunavut is included in the Northwest Territories before 2001.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriages Database, 1981 to 2008, Survey 3232 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

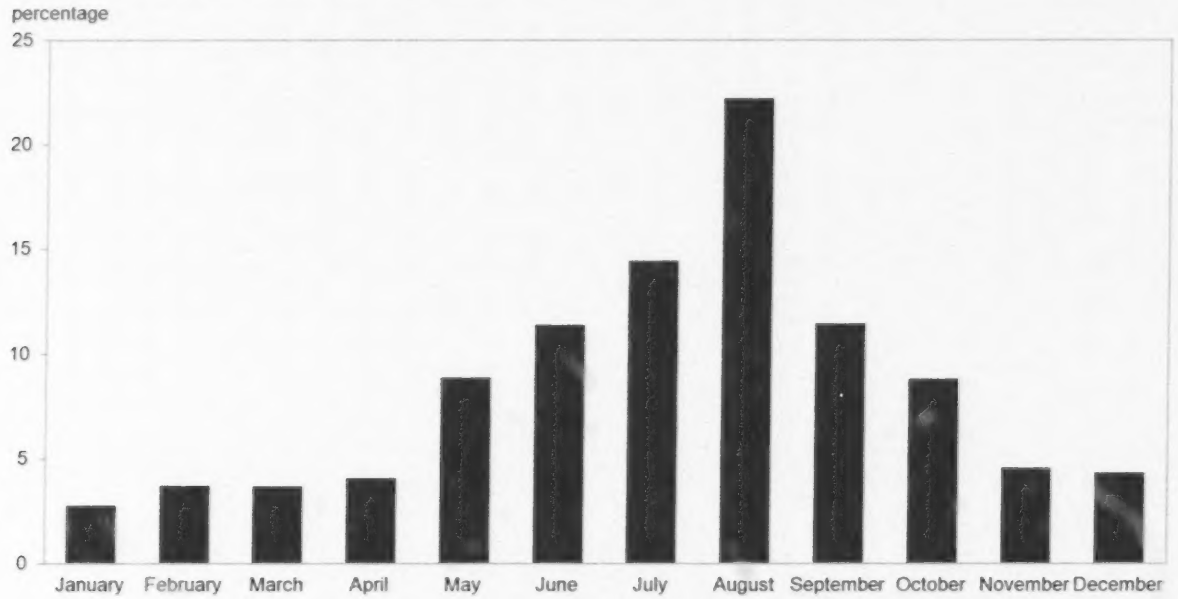
The number of marriages has fluctuated over the past century and has been influenced by historical events. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, there were fewer marriages and a lower crude rate as people were probably less willing or able to marry during a period of high unemployment and challenging economic circumstances. In 1939, Canada entered the Second World War and some couples may have married to reduce the likelihood of possible conscription—which would have affected never-married men more than married men. While low during the war years, the number of marriages rose again in 1946 at the end of the war. The number of marriages was then relatively stable throughout much of the 1950s and early 1960s before increasing during the subsequent decade, peaking at 200,470 marriages in 1972. This corresponded to members of the large baby-boom cohort reaching ages where marriage rates were high at that time. In 2000, there was a small increase in the number of marriages perhaps as some people wanted to marry in the millennium. Despite a growing total population over time, the number of people getting married has been on an overall downward trajectory for close to forty years.

Since the 1960s, the age of people getting married for the first time has been rising. In 2008, women married for the first time at 29.6 years of age, on average, younger than that of men (31.0 years). In contrast, women and men married for the first time at much younger ages throughout the 1960s and 1970s, at roughly age 23 for women and age 25 for men. Despite an increasing average age at marriage during the past four decades, there has been a fairly consistent age differential between women and men.

One of the consequences of relatively high divorce rates is that more people in the population are potentially able to marry again. People who divorce tend to be younger than those whose marriages end through death, and these people may be more able or willing to enter a subsequent union. The average age of divorced women at remarriage in 2008 was 44.8 years and for men it was 48.4 years. For women and men who married in 2008 and who had previously been widowed, the average age at marriage was 63.4 years and 72.0 years, respectively.

Seasonal trends in marriages are evident from the marriage data (Figure 8). Most marriages took place in the summer months of August (22.2% of marriages in 2008) and July (14.4%), followed by September and June (11.4% each). The lowest number of marriages took place from January to April—with January being the least popular month for weddings as 2.8% of the marriages in 2008 occurred this month—as well as November and December.

Figure 8
Distribution of marriages, by month of occurrence, Canada, 2008



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriages Database, 2008, Survey 3232.

Across Canada, in 2008, the number of marriages increased for Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Nunavut over the previous year. British Columbia had a stable number of marriages while there were decreases for the other provinces, Yukon and the Northwest Territories. In 2008, the crude marriage rate was highest in Prince Edward Island (6.8 marriages per 1,000 population) up from 6.4 one year earlier. The crude marriage rate in 2008 was lowest in the territories: Yukon (4.0), the Northwest Territories (2.7) and Nunavut (2.5) as well as in the province of Quebec (2.9). In the territories and Quebec, the proportion of people who live common-law is much higher than elsewhere in the country.

Divorces, 2008[16]

This section on divorces analyses the number of divorces, the crude divorce rate and age at divorce for both Canada overall and for the provinces and territories, using administrative data from the Canadian Vital Statistics Database. Divorces can be granted only following a legal marriage.[17]

There were 70,226 divorces in Canada in 2008, or a crude divorce rate of 21.1 divorces per 10,000 population (Table 2). Historical patterns in the number and rates of divorces are primarily associated with legislative changes. For much of the 20th Century, there were few divorces given existing social norms and restrictive grounds for divorce. Over the last century, the number of divorces peaked following the 1968 Divorce Act, which introduced 'no fault' divorce based on separation of three years or more. In 1986, the Divorce Act was amended to reduce the separation requirement to one year or more. The following year, in 1987, there was a record high of 96,200 divorces and a crude rate of 36.4 divorces per 10,000 population. For about the last twenty years, the number of divorces and the crude divorce rates have been fairly stable.

Table 2
Divorces and crude divorce rates, Canada, provinces and territories, 1981 to 2008

Year	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.	Canada
	number													
1981	569	187	2,285	1,334	19,193	21,680	2,399	1,932	8,418	9,533	75	66	...	67,671
1986	687	199	2,609	1,729	19,026	27,549	2,982	2,479	9,556	11,299	94	95	...	78,304
1991	912	269	2,280	1,652	20,274	27,694	2,790	2,240	8,388	10,368	67	86	...	77,020
1996	1,060	237	2,228	1,450	18,078	25,035	2,603	2,216	7,509	10,898	115	99	...	71,528
2001	755	246	1,945	1,570	17,094	26,516	2,480	1,955	8,252	10,115	91	83	8	71,110
2002	842	258	1,990	1,461	16,499	26,170	2,396	1,959	8,291	10,125	90	68	6	70,155
2003	662	281	1,907	1,450	16,738	27,513	2,352	1,992	7,960	9,820	87	62	4	70,828
2004	837	293	2,000	1,415	15,999	26,374	2,333	1,875	8,317	10,049	66	71	15	69,644
2005	789	283	1,961	1,444	15,423	28,805	2,429	1,922	8,075	9,954	109	65	10	71,269
2006	831	287	2,161	1,527	14,965	31,983	2,221	1,983	8,329	10,235	84	54	21	74,681
2007	969	278	2,006	1,499	14,336	31,242	2,279	1,850	8,466	10,071	95	64	12	73,167
2008	907	306	1,902	1,458	13,899	29,692	2,241	1,858	8,868	8,903	108	58	26	70,226
	rate per 10,000													
1981	9.9	15.1	26.7	18.9	29.3	24.6	23.2	19.8	36.7	33.7	31.4	13.9	...	27.3
1986	11.9	15.5	29.3	23.8	28.4	29.2	27.3	24.1	39.3	37.6	38.5	17.4	...	30.0
1991	15.7	20.6	24.9	22.2	28.7	26.5	25.1	22.3	32.4	30.7	23.2	22.2	...	27.5
1996	18.9	17.5	23.9	19.3	24.9	22.6	23.0	21.7	27.1	28.1	36.6	23.7	...	24.2
2001	14.5	18.0	20.9	20.9	23.1	22.3	21.5	19.5	27.0	24.8	30.2	20.3	2.8	22.9
2002	16.2	18.8	21.3	19.5	22.2	21.6	20.7	19.7	26.5	24.7	29.6	16.3	2.1	22.4
2003	12.8	20.5	20.3	19.3	22.4	22.5	20.2	20.0	25.0	23.8	28.1	14.6	1.4	22.4
2004	16.2	21.3	21.3	18.9	21.2	21.3	19.9	18.8	25.7	24.2	21.0	16.4	5.0	21.8
2005	15.3	20.5	20.9	19.3	20.3	23.0	20.6	19.3	24.3	23.7	34.2	15.0	3.3	22.1
2006	16.3	20.8	23.0	20.5	19.6	25.3	18.8	20.0	24.3	24.1	26.0	12.5	6.8	22.9
2007	19.1	20.1	21.4	20.1	18.6	24.4	19.1	18.5	24.1	23.4	29.2	14.7	3.8	22.2
2008	17.9	21.9	20.3	19.5	17.9	23.0	18.6	18.3	24.7	20.3	32.6	13.3	8.2	21.1

Note: Nunavut is included in the Northwest Territories before 2001.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriages Database, 1981 to 2008, Survey 3235 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

16. Divorce data in this section are from Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Divorce Database, Survey 3235.
17. Therefore, this article does not analyse common-law union dissolutions.

Similar to the fluctuation in the number of divorces and the crude divorce rate at the national level from year to year, this also occurs at the provincial and territorial level. Few divorces occur in the territories where the populations are relatively small, resulting in greater annual variation.

Across Canada, the crude divorce rate was highest in Yukon (32.6 divorces per 10,000 population). Provincially, the crude divorce rate was highest in Alberta in 2008 (24.7 divorces per 10,000 population), followed by Ontario (23.0). In both 2006 and 2007, Ontario had the highest provincial crude divorce rate, followed by Alberta.

In contrast, the lowest crude divorce rates in Canada in 2008 were in Nunavut (8.2 divorces per 10,000 population) and the Northwest Territories (13.3). Among the provinces, the crude divorce rate was lowest in Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, at 17.9 divorces per 10,000 population in each province in 2008. These two provinces both have proportionally higher senior populations than the national average, who in turn are less likely to divorce. Because the crude divorce rate is influenced by the age structure, an older population would be expected to have a lower crude divorce rate. Alberta, in contrast, has a younger population, which helps to account for a crude divorce rate that is higher than the national average.

Close to one-fifth (19.4%) of divorces that were finalized in 2008 were for marriages of up to five years duration, while a further 22.6% of divorces were for marriages that lasted between five and nine years. An additional 41.6% of divorces in 2008 were for marriages that had lasted between 10 and 24 years and 16.4% were for marriage durations of 25 years or more.

In Canada, the average duration of marriage for persons who finalized their divorce in 2008 was 13.7 years (Table 3). The average duration was shortest in Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories (13.1 years) and longest in New Brunswick (15.6 years), as well as Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia (15.5 years each).

The primary reason provided for divorces finalized in 2008 was separation of at least one year (93.6%).[18] An additional 3.7% of the reasons provided for marital breakdown on the divorce application were for adultery, followed by mental cruelty (1.6%) and physical cruelty (1.2%). Other provinces and territories did not vary substantially from the Canadian average except in Quebec where the reasons for marital breakdown were: separation of at least one year (78.9%), adultery (12.0%), mental cruelty (5.6%) and physical cruelty (3.6%).

The total divorce rate is an indicator describing divorce frequency which provides the number of marriages (out of 10,000) that would end in divorce if the duration-specific divorce rates, calculated by length of marriage in a

Table 3
Mean duration of marriages for divorced people, Canada, provinces and territories, 1981 to 2008

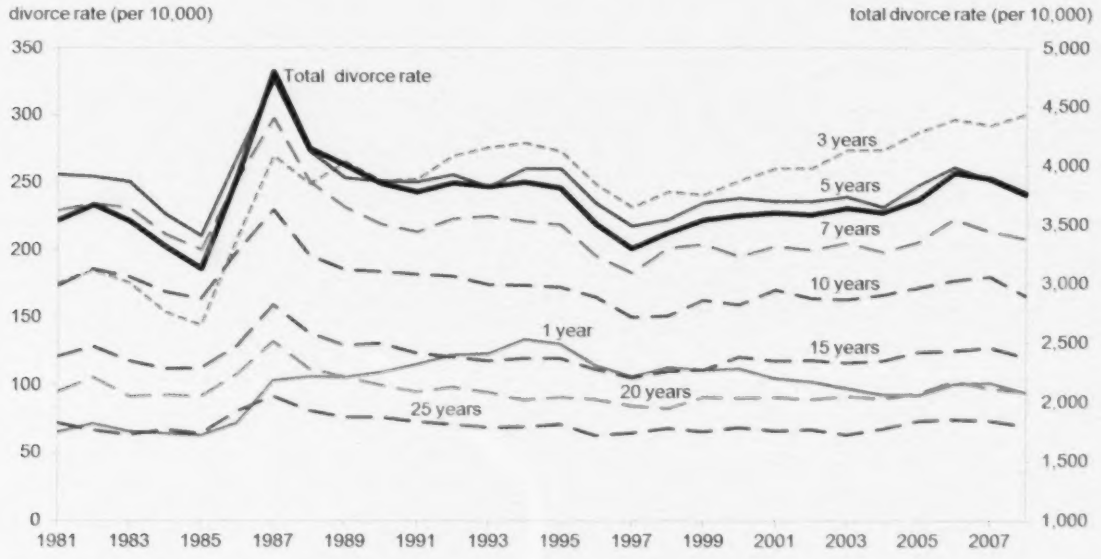
Year	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.	Canada
	in years													
1981	13.8	14.9	13.2	14.2	14.8	14.6	13.2	12.6	12.6	14.4	14.6	12.8	..	14.1
1986	14.5	15.7	13.5	14.2	14.2	14.6	13.2	12.9	13.2	15.3	12.7	15.7	..	14.2
1991	13.7	15.5	13.4	14.1	13.7	13.6	12.3	13.2	13.4	14.4	12.7	11.7	..	13.7
1996	13.8	15.0	13.8	14.4	13.2	14.0	13.2	13.0	13.5	14.0	13.4	13.3	..	13.7
2001	14.0	17.0	14.8	14.9	13.5	13.6	13.2	12.9	13.9	14.1	14.0	13.2	..	13.8
2002	13.8	15.0	14.5	15.3	13.5	13.7	13.4	13.0	13.8	14.0	13.8	12.5	..	13.8
2003	14.5	16.3	15.0	15.0	13.4	13.4	13.3	13.5	14.1	14.3	15.0	13.7	..	13.7
2004	15.1	16.0	15.2	15.1	13.5	13.7	13.4	13.9	13.9	14.4	12.0	11.8	..	13.9
2005	14.7	16.8	15.0	15.4	13.4	13.7	13.3	13.6	14.2	14.5	15.5	12.1	..	13.9
2006	15.2	16.5	15.3	15.5	13.4	13.5	13.6	13.5	14.1	14.2	13.4	12.9	..	13.8
2007	14.4	15.9	15.4	15.4	13.3	13.5	13.7	13.9	14.0	14.4	13.6	13.8	..	13.7
2008	15.5	15.2	15.5	15.6	13.4	13.4	13.7	13.1	14.0	14.4	14.3	13.1	..	13.7

Notes: Includes divorces for marriages of all durations. The mean duration of marriages for divorced people is based on rates in order to control for fluctuations in age structure over time, which allow for comparisons between provinces. The mean duration of marriages for divorced people cannot be calculated for Nunavut because marriage data only exists since 1999 for that territory.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriages Database, 1926 to 2008, Survey 3232 and Canadian Vital Statistics, Divorces Database, 1926 to 2008, Survey 3235 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

18. Proportions are based on reasons for marital breakdown made on the application. In some cases, multiple reasons were selected, consequently, there was a higher number of reasons than divorces.

Figure 9
Duration-specific divorce rates for various durations of marriage, by year of divorce and total divorce rate, Canada, 1981 to 2008



Note: Total divorce rate is based on divorces for marriages up to 25 years.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriages Database, 1926 to 2008, Survey 3232 and Canadian Vital Statistics, Divorces Database, 1926 to 2008, Survey 3235 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

given calendar year, were applied to those 10,000 marriages. As a result, this indicator statistically controls for the effect of annual fluctuations in the number of marriages. Bias does occur, however, as the result of two events: death and migration. Following the death of a spouse, divorce is not possible, consequently underestimating the total divorce rate. If a divorce is not obtained in the province where the marriage took place, this results in an overestimation of divorce frequency where there is a net migration gain and an underestimation where there is a net loss.

The trend in the total divorce rate has been relatively stable since the late 1990s with a slight increase in 2006 (Figure 9). However, the divorce rate for three-year marriages has been increasing fairly steadily since this time, unlike marriages of other lengths. The divorce rates for marriages of other durations have generally been falling in the past several years and tend to be lower for marriages of longer duration. In 2008, the divorce rate for one-year marriages was about the same as that of marriages of 20 years (about 94 divorces per 10,000 marriages of each duration in 2008), a trend that began around 2004.

If the duration-specific divorce rates calculated for 2008 remain stable then the 25-year total divorce rate per 10,000 marriages was 3,758 in 2008, meaning that 37.6% of marriages entered in 2008 are expected to end in divorce before the 25th year of marriage. The 50-year total divorce rate in 2008 was 4,307, meaning that 43.1% of marriages entered in 2008 are expected to end in divorce before the 50th year of marriage.

Both the average age at divorce and the average age at which these individuals married increased slightly between 2006 and 2008, and were higher for men than for women. The average age of marriage among persons who divorced in 2008 was 27.6 years for women and 30.2 years for men, and the average age at divorce was 41.9 years and 44.5 years, respectively. In 2006, among people who divorced that year, the average age at marriage was 27.1 years for women and 29.7 years for men, while the respective average ages at divorce were 41.6 years and 44.2 years.

In 2008, the average age of divorce was highest for women in Nova Scotia and Quebec (43.7 years each) and lowest for Nunavut (38.4 years) while for men the average age was highest in Yukon (47.1), Nova Scotia and Quebec (46.2 each) and also lowest in Nunavut (42.6 years).

Table A-1

Duration-specific divorce rate (per 10,000), Canada, marriage cohorts 1953/1954 to 2007/2008

Calendar year		Census year		Length of marriage (in years)																									Year of observation	TDR[1]
Year	Number of marriages	Marriage cohort	Number of marriages	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
1954	128,629	1953 to 1954	129,832	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	50	74	64	62	71	86	82	78	75	70	62	1979	3,180
1955	128,029	1954 to 1955	128,329	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	57	73	65	68	69	85	85	83	75	70	68	65	1980	3,282
1956	132,713	1955 to 1956	130,371	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	59	83	71	73	77	87	90	90	89	78	74	69	72	1981	3,534
1957	133,186	1956 to 1957	132,950	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	67	82	76	75	78	92	105	96	87	85	84	75	75	66	1982	3,662
1958	131,525	1957 to 1958	132,356	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	61	79	81	81	83	91	101	97	92	84	82	78	77	72	63	1983	3,527
1959	132,722	1958 to 1959	132,124	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	68	91	82	80	86	96	105	103	92	89	80	77	84	77	68	67	1984	3,312
1960	130,338	1959 to 1960	131,530	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	70	93	95	91	97	111	111	110	100	95	90	84	90	87	76	67	64	1985	3,124
1961	128,475	1960 to 1961	129,407	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	73	97	95	95	97	119	119	116	108	100	95	95	95	94	81	78	64	80	1986	3,915
1962	129,381	1961 to 1962	128,928	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	71	105	99	106	103	121	133	123	115	108	97	96	98	106	88	78	71	83	91	1987	4,796
1963	131,111	1962 to 1963	130,246	..	..	..	..	..	..	71	114	113	112	114	131	133	134	124	118	104	99	108	105	91	86	79	88	102	81	1988	4,146
1964	138,135	1963 to 1964	134,623	..	..	..	..	..	68	106	109	113	124	142	136	140	128	126	114	110	113	109	100	92	83	101	111	93	76	1989	4,002
1965	145,519	1964 to 1965	141,827	..	..	..	..	61	98	112	121	134	150	153	153	139	134	124	117	118	115	104	97	92	104	123	92	83	76	1990	3,846
1966	155,596	1965 to 1966	150,558	..	..	..	42	83	112	128	143	156	162	163	148	137	130	123	121	115	113	101	93	108	124	104	91	84	73	1991	3,776
1967	165,879	1966 to 1967	160,738	..	..	31	68	102	126	139	166	177	171	155	145	136	131	132	128	118	106	94	112	132	114	97	85	79	71	1992	3,852
1968	171,766	1967 to 1968	168,823	..	17	49	75	115	142	162	183	173	165	156	151	137	138	137	117	109	97	116	133	112	108	92	82	82	68	1993	3,819
1969	182,183	1968 to 1969	176,975	3	22	53	83	122	158	182	184	171	165	160	153	148	146	133	112	103	121	139	118	106	98	90	83	74	69	1994	3,857
1970	188,428	1969 to 1970	185,306	3	25	55	92	151	177	192	192	176	174	165	163	159	139	127	112	121	147	118	113	100	96	87	77	72	71	1995	3,807
1971	191,324	1970 to 1971	189,876	4	28	61	106	161	186	189	191	184	180	173	166	151	132	115	129	151	121	113	101	95	92	85	82	78	62	1996	3,499
1972	200,470	1971 to 1972	195,897	4	33	74	117	174	193	196	197	191	188	186	169	145	126	145	159	131	122	111	100	98	84	88	81	72	65	1997	3,295
1973	199,064	1972 to 1973	199,767	5	36	83	129	181	203	212	211	206	204	180	155	135	152	175	138	126	111	104	100	94	90	84	75	72	68	1998	3,425
1974	198,824	1973 to 1974	198,944	5	44	94	136	184	213	227	229	218	189	168	146	160	184	149	129	111	108	106	98	89	90	79	71	71	65	1999	3,536
1975	197,592	1974 to 1975	198,208	6	52	104	147	199	225	242	234	214	185	163	172	197	150	139	130	112	112	103	94	91	83	78	71	72	68	2000	3,576
1976	186,848	1975 to 1976	192,220	8	59	111	161	221	255	250	231	198	168	199	210	168	155	134	123	117	116	106	101	89	82	78	77	72	66	2001	3,599
1977	187,344	1976 to 1977	187,096	8	63	116	165	231	254	244	211	183	204	229	184	161	145	129	121	116	109	103	90	84	79	76	76	69	67	2002	3,579
1978	185,528	1977 to 1978	186,436	7	65	123	175	235	250	221	200	230	248	196	175	155	138	132	117	109	108	91	80	82	83	80	78	73	63	2003	3,638
1979	187,816	1978 to 1979	186,672	8	58	132	185	226	226	211	252	274	211	185	164	151	142	127	119	115	98	88	86	90	85	84	75	77	67	2004	3,599
1980	191,072	1979 to 1980	189,444	7	65	134	176	206	210	268	297	227	207	184	168	150	144	133	119	106	93	93	97	90	87	81	74	76	73	2005	3,709
1981	190,088	1980 to 1981	190,580	8	71	133	154	190	269	316	250	218	189	182	164	152	136	131	111	105	97	99	94	91	89	85	83	76	74	2006	3,933
1982	188,360	1981 to 1982	189,224	9	65	118	144	260	326	263	232	216	194	180	162	155	136	120	105	104	99	101	99	89	90	89	77	78	73	2007	3,883
1983	184,680	1982 to 1983	186,520	8	64	109	209	322	273	247	219	200	186	174	160	142	129	112	110	110	100	99	96	92	89	84	85	77	69	2008	3,758
1984	185,600	1983 to 1984	185,140	8	63	150	270	263	253	237	213	205	186	174	153	136	118	113	111	108	107	97	94	89	87	89	84	75	..	..	..
1985	184,096	1984 to 1985	184,848	8	72	212	249	260	251	230	223	204	190	172	147	124	123	123	121	116	99	97	93	94	92	89	83	..	..	..	..
1986	175,518	1985 to 1986	179,807	10	103	217	265	263	250	240	225	206	184	165	144	141	131	128	117	117	105	103	97	103	93	88	..	..	..	..	..
1987	182,153	1986 to 1987	178,836	20	106	216	251	260	255	238	221	198	173	150	141	136	133	124	118	117	109	104	105	97	93	..	..	..	..	..	..
1988	187,728	1987 to 1988	184,941	19	106	214	252	259	246	241	219	176	159	151	150	139	131	124	116	111	103	106	96	94	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1989	190,640	1988 to 1989	189,184	19	109	211	270	271	260	233	195	171	170	162	155	147	134	125	118	117	112	106	102	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1990	187,759	1989 to 1990	189,200	17	115	234	276	274	260	215	183	179	172	159	156	140	137	126	124	121	110	100	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1991	172,431	1990 to 1991	180,095	19	122	235	279	277	234	207	201	187	177	170	150	148	134	131	125	121	104	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1992	164,630	1991 to 1992	168,531	22	123	246	273	248	217	214	204	186	175	164	152	141	135	129	127	114	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1993	159,529	1992 to 1993	162,080	23	134	239	248	229	222	218	195	175	174	163	153	148	141	134	120	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1994	160,048	1993 to 1994	159,789	22	130	224	231	242	235	215	202	188	173	166	160	149	142	131	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1995	160,339	1994 to 1995	160,194	20	114	205	243	253	238	215	200	195	171	172	166	156	141	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1996	156,763	1995 to 1996	158,551	16	106	220	241	254	236	212	205	192	172	177	165	154	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1997	153,395	1996 to 1997	155,079	16	113	216	251	238	236	221	198	191	191	180	156	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1998	153,854	1997 to 1998	153,625	15	111	226	260	248	239	216	205	209	193	166	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1999	155,935	1998 to 1999	154,895	17	112	241	260	251	232	225	222	197	186	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2000	157,534	1999 to 2000	156,735	14	104	233	274	240	248	235	213	194	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2001	146,706	2000 to 2001	152,120	12	102	236	274	265	261	234	208	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2002	146,810	2001 to 2002	146,758	11	97	225	287	291	251	222	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2003	147,491	2002 to 2003	147,151	12	92	230	296	268	240	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2004	146,363	2003 to 2004	146,927	10	92	266	292	256	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2005	148,013	2004 to 2005	147,188	11	100	277	300	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2006	150,601	2005 to 2006	149,307	8	101	259	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2007	149,056	2006 to 2007	149,829	7	94	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2008	147,848	2007 to 2008	148,452	9	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

1. Total divorce rate.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Marriages Database, 1953 to 2008, Survey 3232 and Canadian Vital Statistics, Divorces Database, 1953 to 2008, Survey 3235 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.